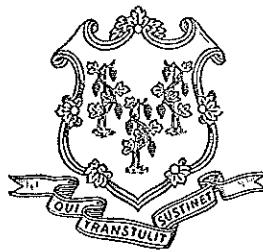


SENATOR GARY D. LeBEAU
Third District

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State of Connecticut
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February 22, 2013

Senate Co-Chair Anthony Musto
House Co-Chair Ed Jutilla
Government Administration and Elections Committee
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Chairs, Ranking Members and Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

Testimony in Support of: HB-5494, AN ACT ESTABLISHING FRENCH CANADIAN AMERICAN DAY.

Good morning. I want to thank Co-Chairs Musto and Jutilla, Ranking Members McLachlan and Hwang, as well as distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee for the opportunity to testify on behalf of House Bill 5494, An Act Establishing French Canadian American Day.

Because of the rich influence of French Canadians in American History, it is vital for Connecticut to establish a French Canadian American Day on the 24th of June each year.

For generations, our forefathers made many significant contributions to this state. Our parents and grandparents toiled in the factories and mills that propelled the industrial revolution. They helped build the roads we travel on and the homes we live in. Our shared love of the French language binds us and adds cultural value to the state we live in. Yet, unlike other ethnic groups of similar size, our story remains mostly untold.

Midsummer festivals, such as those linked with the June solstice, have been held in Europe for thousands of years. When people converted to Christianity, elements of these festivals were combined with feast days for Christian saints. In France, the celebrations around the feast day of Saint John the Baptist were widely enjoyed and French colonists introduced these traditions to North America and right here in Connecticut.

In a 2006 survey in the Census Bureau, the total population of French Canadian in Connecticut was approximately 104,924. Today, persons of French-Canadian heritage compose the fifth largest ethnic group in our state. With this large amount of citizens residing in Connecticut of French Canadian decent, it is apparent that they should be recognized this day.

I encourage you to consider this matter and help promote having a French Canadian American Day on June 24 of each year. It is time we recognize a group of people who have established their home in Connecticut for decades.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gary D. LeBeau".

Gary LeBeau
State Senator, 3rd District